



# Children, Families and Poverty

There is special concern for **young children** in poverty because of its prevalence and long-term consequences . . .

- more than 40% of all births in the U.S. are Medicaid supported
- childhood poverty increases the chances that this child is:
  - less likely to finish high school
  - more likely to be poor
  - less likely to be working as a young adult
- the longer that children are poor during the early years, the worse are adult outcomes
- the younger the child, the worse are adult outcomes

**What can account for these consequences?**

# Consequences of Poverty for Children

## Economic stresses

- housing instability
- lower school quality
- poor health care
- risky neighborhoods

## Emotional stresses

- social isolation
- parental stress
- substance abuse risk
- legal problems

## Family Stress

- marital difficulty
- maternal depression

## Parenting Quality

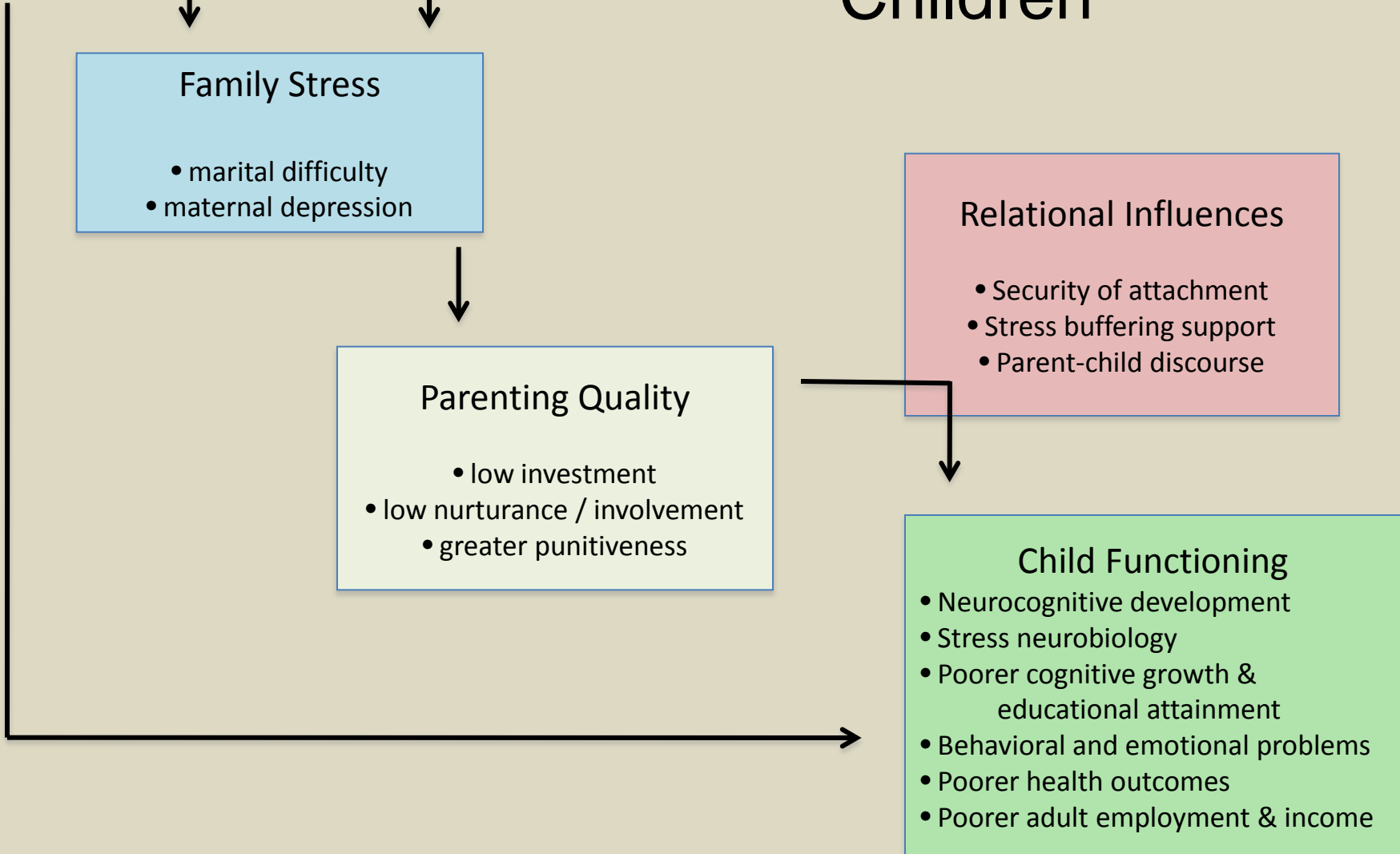
- low investment
- low nurturance / involvement
- greater punitiveness

## Relational Influences

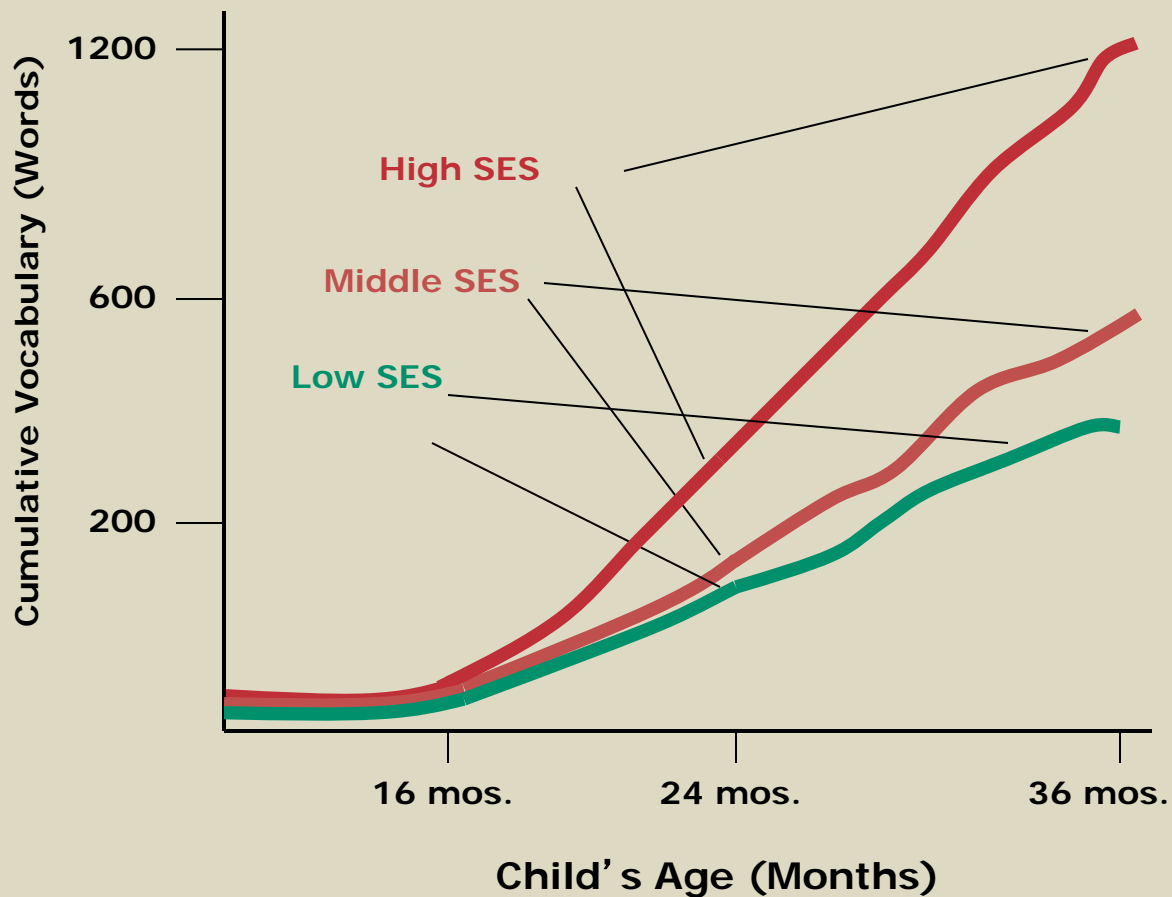
- Security of attachment
- Stress buffering support
- Parent-child discourse

## Child Functioning

- Neurocognitive development
- Stress neurobiology
- Poorer cognitive growth & educational attainment
- Behavioral and emotional problems
- Poorer health outcomes
- Poorer adult employment & income



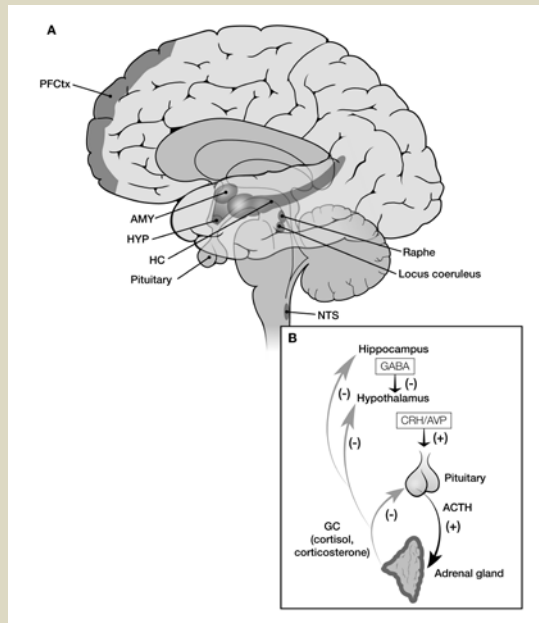
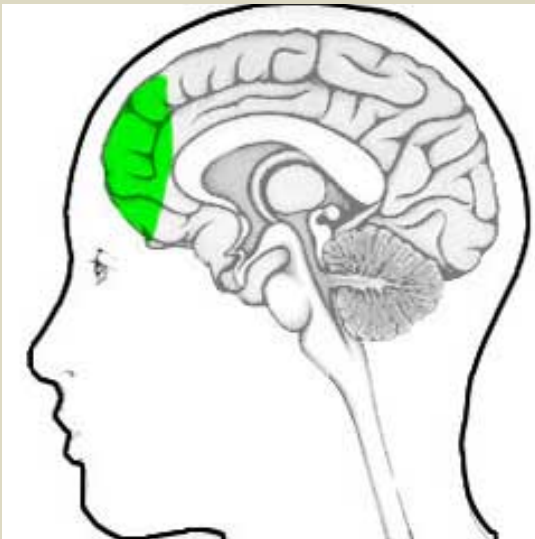
# Early Impacts on Cognitive and Learning Skills



Source: Hart & Risley (1995)

# Neurobiological correlates of child poverty

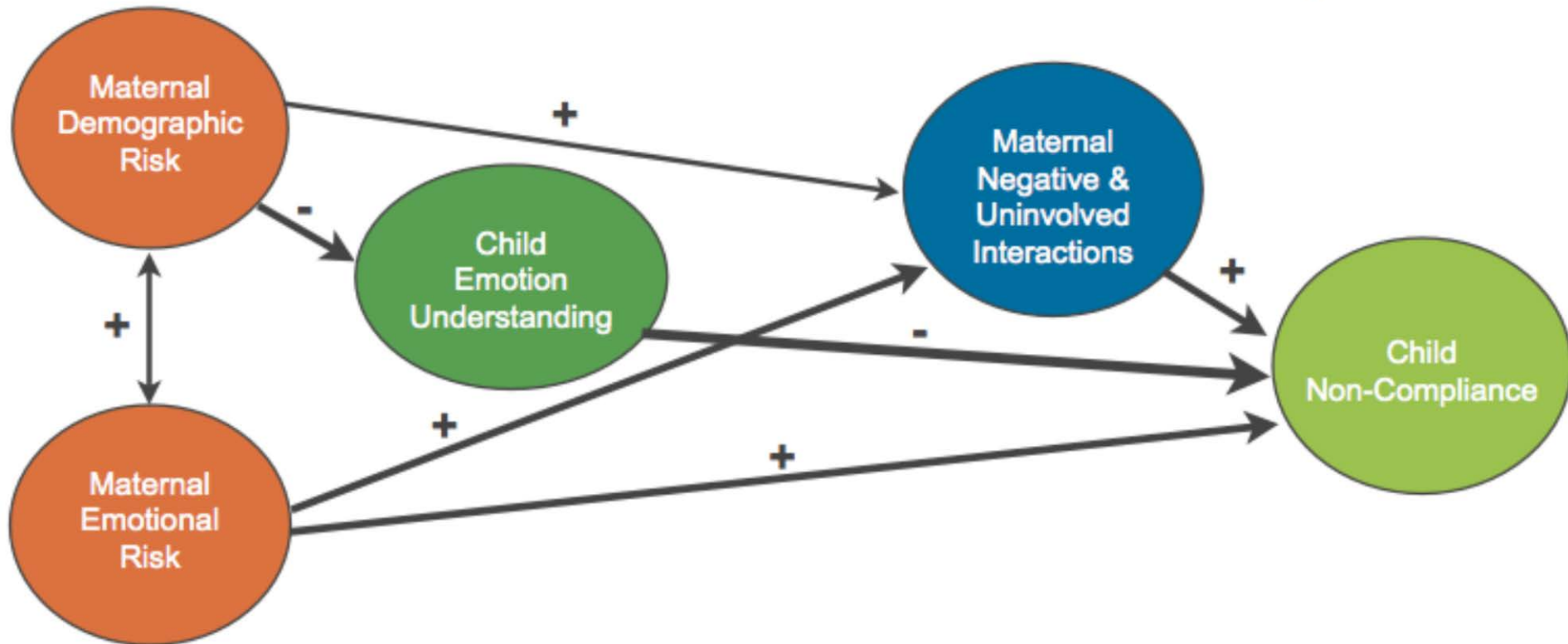
- children age 7-12 from families with income ~150% FPL score lower on measures of **prefrontal functioning**, especially with respect to working memory, visual attention, and language, compared to children from middle-income homes



- infants and young children experiencing chronic stress develop altered systems of stress neurobiology that can make them over-reactive to cues of threat and less capable of adaptive coping

Preschool

School-Entry







## POLICY STATEMENT

# Early Childhood Adversity, Toxic Stress, and the Role of the Pediatrician: Translating Developmental Science Into Lifelong Health

## abstract

FREE

Advances in a wide range of biological, behavioral, and social sciences are expanding our understanding of how early environmental influences (the ecology) and genetic predispositions (the biologic program) affect learning capacities, adaptive behaviors, lifelong physical and mental health, and adult productivity. A supporting technical report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) presents an integrated ecobiodevelopmental framework to assist in translating these dramatic advances in developmental science into improved health across the life span. Pediatricians are now armed with new information about the adverse effects of toxic stress on brain development, as well as a deeper understanding of the early life origins of many adult diseases. As trusted authorities in child health and development, pediatric providers must now complement the early identification of developmental concerns with a greater focus on those interventions and community investments that reduce external threats to healthy brain growth. To this end, AAP endorses a developing leadership role for the entire pediatric community—one that mobilizes the scientific expertise of both basic and clinical researchers, the family-centered care of the pediatric medical home, and the public influence of AAP and its state chapters—to catalyze fundamental change in early childhood policy and services. AAP is committed to leveraging science to inform the development of innovative strategies to reduce the precipitants of toxic stress in young children and to mitigate their negative effects on the course of development and health across the life span. *Pediatrics* 2012;129:e224–e231

COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH, COMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ADOPTION, AND DEPENDENT CARE, AND SECTION ON DEVELOPMENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL PEDIATRICS

### KEY WORDS

advocacy, brain development, ecobiodevelopmental framework, family pediatrics, health promotion, human capital investments, new morbidity, toxic stress, resilience

### ABBREVIATIONS

AAP—American Academy of Pediatrics  
EBD—ecobiodevelopmental

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## the policy context . . .

- poverty is often absent from the **current political debate**, even though the economy is not absent from this debate
- studies of **early brain development** contribute to our understanding of the effects of economic stress on child development and the importance of early intervention
- research shows that **children's growth is cumulative and compounding**, underscoring the biological and societal costs of failing to intervene early
- **evidence-based interventions** provide significantly better understanding of what strategies can work to improve children's well-being



Thanks !

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CENTER FOR POVERTY RESEARCH

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